

THE CASE FOR EUGENICS

POPULAR LECTURE BY LORD HORDER

The Popular Lecture, at the close of the Melbourne Meeting of the British Medical Association, was delivered on September 13th by Lord HORDER, who took as his subject "The Case for Eugenics." As president of the Eugenics Society he found a special pleasure in addressing an Australian audience on that subject, because an Australian stockbreeder, Henry Twitchin, whose interest in eugenics was derived from his breeding of farm animals, gave £1,000 annually to the British society for several years before his death, and bequeathed it the residue of his estate, whereby the amount of that donation was increased threefold.

Lord Horder defined eugenics, in the words of Francis Galton, as the study of agencies under social control which may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either physically or mentally. While fully appreciative of the various efforts made for social reform and human betterment in our day, he held that the economic advantages, using the term in its widest sense, lay with the efforts towards racial improvement rather than with social service in a particular generation. Eugenics had no quarrel with the principle underlying social and environmental reform, but he could not help observing that a good deal of such reform was no more than tinkering with the situation. The eugenic student was more humanist than humanitarian in his outlook. He did not believe that permanent results would accrue from pampering the individual. He held that the greatest service that one human being could render his kind was to do his utmost to see that every new life was started on as sound and sturdy a basis as possible. With an annual bill for social services in England and Wales of some four hundred million, the fact remained that one person out of ten was too dull or unworthy to be absorbed into industry, one out of 120 was mentally defective, and one out of 300 certified as insane. The secret of the trouble was that heredity had been forgotten, and that heredity if it did not work for us worked against us. In concentrating upon nurture, nature had been neglected. Preventive medicine had turned attention to the child, the infant, even the pre-natal life; but it was necessary to go back further still, for with conception there was stamped upon the future individual either the power to live healthily or the burden of handicaps from which, whatever subsequent care was lavished upon him, he might never be free. Eugenics was by far the most profitable field of preventive medicine. Civilization had advanced far enough for biological control to be achieved, just as completely as physical control had been achieved already. Admittedly the knowledge of human genetics was meagre, but there must be a mass of unascertained facts which would prove of enormous value if they were available, and though the same methods could not be employed in the study of human beings as in animals or plants, there were definite reasons for believing that the same basic laws operated throughout the biological field.

Possible Applications of the Eugenic Principle

The lecturer made certain suggestions for action on the main principle of eugenics, supposing this to be accepted. The study of genetics should be encouraged in the universities and schools; scholarships and research studentships should be instituted; genetics should be taught to medical students, a place being made for it if necessary by omitting something of far less importance from the pre-clinical subjects—for example, from physiology—the compilation of family pedigrees should be encouraged, also the use of pre-marital schedules of health. It should be possible for men and women of marriageable age to produce, if not a pedigree, at least a statement, kept up to date, of their physical and mental fitness. A "family conscience" should be cultivated to counteract the selfishness of the childless marriage when both partners were healthy, and the "tender-mindedness" of women who refused to brace themselves to fulfil the supreme function. If the monetary

position of possible parents was a real, and not merely a selfish, bar they should be helped indirectly by remission of taxation or directly by family subsidies.

Finally, Lord Horder spoke of eugenic principles as having a negative as well as a positive aspect; indeed, it was negative eugenics which had attracted a disproportionate attention, partly because attainment was easier, more immediate, and entailed much less sacrifice. There were at present two practical examples of negative eugenics. The first was the sterilization of the unfit. Here the official view of the Eugenics Society was that the greater hope of inculcating a eugenic conscience lay along the path of voluntary rather than enforced sterilization; a strong and representative committee was at present working on a Bill in Parliament to implement the recommendations of the Brock Committee. The other form of practical negative eugenics was birth control, or, more properly, conception control (though it was unlikely that the more accurate term would now replace the other). That birth control had come to stay seemed certain, but that there was no method as yet which was free from some disadvantage, either on physiological or aesthetic grounds, or simply on account of unreliability, was equally certain. Unfortunately, the practice of birth control had acted dysgenically during the last fifty years, because it had been largely confined to persons of superior biological endowment, and had not been practised by those who needed most some means whereby the births of their children could be spaced—and the spacing of births was the only proper use to which the practice of contraception should be put. Instruction in these methods should be provided by local authorities under medical supervision in properly organized clinics, and the instruction should not be confined merely to women whose lives would be in danger from further confinements or those suffering from gynaecological diseases.

The aim of eugenics was to study the laws of heredity as applied to human beings, so as to improve the physical and mental quality of the race. Men and women who accepted the serious responsibility of parenthood must be free from disease and defect which might be transmissible by heredity, but at present it was among the fittest stocks that the birth rate was lowest and among the unfit that it was highest. Which only demonstrated the need for the inculcation of eugenic wisdom.

WAR AND PEACE

A MANIFESTO BY PSYCHIATRISTS

We have received from Dr. J. Roorda, honorary secretary of the Netherlands Medical Association, a copy of the following letter which has been addressed "to the Statesmen of the World." It is signed by 350 psychiatrists and psychologists of various nations.

We psychiatrists, whose duty it is to investigate the normal and diseased mind, and to serve mankind with our knowledge, feel impelled to address a serious word to you in our quality of physicians.

It seems to us that there is in the world a mentality which entails grave dangers to mankind, leading, as it may, to an evident war psychosis. War means that all destructive forces are set loose by mankind against itself. War means the annihilation of mankind by technical science. As in all things human, psychological factors play a very important part in the complicated problem of war. If war is to be prevented the nations and their leaders must understand their own attitude towards war. By self-knowledge a world calamity may be prevented. Therefore we draw your attention to the following:

1. There is a seeming contradiction between the conscious individual aversion to war and the collective preparedness to wage war. This is explained by the fact that the behaviour, the feelings, the thoughts of an independent individual are quite different from those of a man who forms part of a collective whole. Civilized twentieth century man still possesses strong, fierce, and destructive instincts, which have not been sublimated, or only partly so, and which break

loose as soon as the community to which he belongs feels itself threatened by danger. The unconscious desire to give rein to the primitive instinct not only without punishment but even with reward, furthers in a great measure the preparedness for war. It should be realized that the fighting instinct, if well directed, gives energy for much that is good and beautiful. But the same instinct may create chaos if it breaks loose from all restraint, making use of the greatest discoveries of the human intellect.

2. It is appalling to see how little the peoples are alive to reality. The popular ideas of war as they find expression in full-dress uniforms, military display, etc., are no longer in keeping with the realities of war itself. The apathy with regard to the actions and intrigues of the international traffic in arms is surprising to anyone who realizes the dangers into which this traffic threatens to lead them. It should be realized that it is foolish to suffer certain groups of persons to derive personal profit from the death of millions of men. We come to you with the urgent advice to arouse the nations to the realization of fact and the sense of collective self-preservation, these powerful instincts being the strongest allies for the elimination of war. The heightening of the moral and religious sense in your people tends to the same end.

3. From the utterances of well-known statesmen it has repeatedly been evident that many of them have conceptions of war that are identical with those of the average man. Arguments such as "war is the supreme court of appeal" and "war is the necessary outcome of Darwin's theory" are erroneous and dangerous, in view of the realities of modern warfare. They camouflage a primitive craving for power and are meant to stimulate the preparedness for war among the speaker's countrymen. The suggestive force of speeches made by leading statesmen is enormous, and may be dangerous. The warlike spirit, so easily aroused by the cry that the country is in danger, is not to be bridled, as was evident in 1914. Peoples, as well as individuals, under the influence of suggestions like these, may become neurotic. They may be carried away by hallucinations and delusions, thus involving themselves in adventures perilous to their own and other nations' safety.

We psychiatrists declare that our science is sufficiently advanced for us to distinguish between real, pretended, and unconscious motives, even in statesmen. The desire to disguise national militarism by continual talk about peace will not protect political leaders from the judgement of history. The secret promoters of militarism are responsible for the boundless misery which a new war is sure to bring. International organization is now sufficiently advanced to enable statesmen to prevent war by concerted action. Protestation of peace and the desire for peace, however sincere, do not guarantee the self-denying spirit necessary for the maintenance of peace, even at the cost of national sacrifice. If any statesmen should think that the apparatus to ensure peace is as yet insufficiently organized, we advise them to devote to this purpose as much energy and as much money as is now being expended on the armaments of the various countries.

We cannot close without expressing our admiration of those statesmen who show by their actions that their culture and morality are so far advanced that they can lead peoples to a strong organization of peace. In our opinion they alone are truly qualified to act as the leaders of nations.

The directory of the Private Practitioners' Association, which is supplied post free on application to medical practitioners, contains a list of the names and addresses of persons qualified to give massage, medical gymnastics, medical electricity, and other forms of physical therapy in the various parts of the country. Those holding the biophysical assistants' diploma of the Society of Apothecaries are specially designated. All the members of this association are also members of the Chartered Society of Massage and Medical Gymnastics, and work only under the direction of registered medical practitioners. The special forms of treatment which each can undertake are shown in the directory, applications for which should be addressed to the honorary secretary, Mr. J. Stewart Brown, 2, Grove Place, Falmouth.

OPENING OF NEW SESSION

Autumn Dinners

ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL

St. Thomas's Hospital Old Students' Dinner was held on October 4th at the Dorchester Hotel, Sir CUTHBERT WALLACE being in the chair. Following a precedent established two years ago speeches were curtailed, with the result that ample opportunity was given at the end of the dinner for the renewal of old acquaintanceships and for general conversation. The measure was a popular one, and the dinner was adjudged to be most successful in every way.

After the toast of "The King" had been drunk, the chairman proposed "St. Thomas's Hospital and Medical School." The Treasurer, Sir ARTHUR STANLEY, replying for the hospital, offered his congratulations to Sir Cuthbert Wallace on his election as President of the Royal College of Surgeons. Reviewing the progress of the year, he said that reconstruction of the out-patient department had been completed and the department was now as good as it could be with the space at their disposal: it had been possible to do the whole of the work without calling upon the hospital funds at all. High tribute should justly be paid to Colonel Irwin, secretary of the hospital, Mr. Currie, the architect, and to the staff, particularly to Mr. Maybury. As for the hospital itself they had been remodelling the wards, and only two remained to be done. Further, they had done their best to improve the amenities of College House. This had not been easy, because whereas the personnel of College House used to be seventeen, it now amounted to thirty-one. A verandah had now been built, made almost entirely of glass; this could, added Sir Arthur, amid laughter, easily be replaced at the expense of those who broke it. He then referred to Lady Riddell's generous gift towards the erection of a Nurses' Home, which would, incidentally, facilitate the improvement of accommodation for paying patients. He would like to point out, however, that despite this generous gift, and those of Lord Nuffield, Lady Houston, and others, the hospital was not rich.

Professor L. S. DUDGEON, replying as Dean of the Medical School, also congratulated Sir Cuthbert Wallace on his honour, and expressed a hope that his position might enable some co-operation to be exercised between the College and the Medical School. He announced with regret the retirement of the senior surgeon, Mr. Cyril Nitch, who left with the regrets of all. One of the deaths during the year was that of Dr. Grabham, who had entered the medical school as long ago as 1858: he had later had a big practice in Madeira, of which he was uncrowned king. Amongst the honours were Professor Le Gros Clark's appointment to the Chair of Anatomy at Oxford and his Fellowship of the Royal Society. Martin Huggins was now Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, and Dr. W. D. Johnson, Director of Medical Services at Lagos, had been knighted for services in Africa, especially for his work on tropical hygiene. As regards the medical school it had always been said that there could be no further building. However, Professor Appleton considered that *x-ray* equipment was essential in the anatomy department, and this had been installed. Research rooms had also been built. These additions would be of considerable benefit to students. Those in charge of the anatomy department seemed, he added, to show an almost surgical flair for exhausting the treasury. Dealing with the scheme for co-operation with Bart's and Guy's, Professor Dudgeon said that progress had been slow, though Mr. Max Page had conducted the surgical unit at Bart's for a fortnight. The health of the guests was then proposed.

In reply, Professor T. B. JOHNSTON, Dean of Guy's Hospital Medical School, made a witty speech in which dietetics, the hospital corridor, haggis, toothless senility,